

complete the agenda today before adjourning the week. Senator Hall.

SENATOR HALL: Mr. President, members, Mr. Speaker, I appreciate that announcement prior to my bill. LB 177 is enabling legislation for the Metropolitan Utilities District in Omaha to either build or join in a joint effort of building a pipeline so that they could own one. The MUD is a municipal corporation so it is constrained by statutory language. It was born from statutory language so it is necessary that they come back through myself and a number of other co-sponsors from the Metro Omaha area to ask for the authority to build the pipeline. The bottom line, the reason for doing this is to have the ability to look for the best possible natural gas rates for the consumer, the customers of the district. Currently, MUD contracts for the majority, the vast majority of their gas, from Northern Natural Gas. There are other suppliers to the district but they are on an as needed basis. Their main supplier is Northern Natural Company. A similar situation, with the deregulation from Congress with regard to this industry, it has opened up the opportunity. We have seen it happen in other forms of utilities. Natural gas is now one. It used to be that Congress regulated the industry from the ground to the pilot on your stove. That no longer is the case. What MUD is asking through LB 177 is to have the opportunity to look into this area, to look at the possibility to be able to do that if it proves that it is efficient, that it is cost effective, and that it will mean lower rates for the consumer in the end. A similar situation has taken place in Minnesota. Minnegasco has had the same legislation passed up there. They have not implemented it. They have not gone through the process of building or looking at construction, either themselves or jointly, into a pipeline. What has happened, though, what has sprung forth from that legislation being on the books is that Northern Natural Gas, who is also their principal supplier, they happened to purchase one quarter of all of Northern's gas, has dropped the rates considerably. So just the legislation being on the books has actually made it more cost effective for them and their ratepayers. The idea behind the bill is that if it becomes cost effective for MUD to go outside the district, to go outside their state, to go within the state to build or co-build a pipeline that they have that opportunity available to them. There was no opposition to LB 177. I would urge the body to pass the bill over to Select File. Thank you.

SPEAKER BARRETT: Thank you, Senator Hall. Any discussion?